FROM
The Library of
Dr. W. W. Moore

[TRACTS FOR THE TIMES, No. 10.]

OBEDIENCE TO GOD.

OR THE DOCTRINE, GOVERNMENT AND WORSHIP OF THE CHURCH DIVINELY AUTHORIZED AND PRESCRIBED.

Union Theological Seminary
THE LIBRARY
RICHMOND, VA.

A SERMON,

BY

REV. JOHN T. CHALMERS.

Preached on the occasion of the Fifth Anniversary of his Pastorate in Winnsboro, S. C., April 26, 1886.

IBR

UA
23
Zp
no. 7

PHILADELPHIA:
COLLINS & CO.
1886.

[Tracts for the Times, No. 10.]

OBEDIENCE TO GOD.

OR THE DOCTRINE, GOVERNMENT AND WORSHIP OF THE CHURCH DIVINELY AUTHORIZED AND PRESCRIBED.

A sermon by Rev. John T. Chalmers, preached on the occasion of the fifth anniversary of his pastorate in Winnsboro, S. C., April 26, 1886.

"Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams."—1 Sam. 15: 22.

Five years ago I was solemnly set apart to the work of the ministry and installed pastor of this congregation. God has blessed, we trust, the relationship and has given us an encouraging measure of success. But instead of recalling and recounting the blessings of the past five years, I have thought it more appropriate to consider the principles which have in no small degree contributed to our success, and which are indispensable to future growth and prosperity. These principles are loyalty to Jesus Christ, the King and Head of the Church; loyalty to the word of Christ as the only rule of faith and practice; and loyalty to the Church of Christ which we believe to be the most agreeable to and founded on the Word of God.

An application of these principles will necessitate a more diligent study of, thorough acquaintance and greater familiarity on our part, with the teachings of the Scriptures and the doctrinal beliefs of the Church as set forth in the standards.

The first, and by far the most important duty which God requires of man is "obedience to His revealed will." Obedience is the *spirit* of the Christian religion. But how often does it suffer violence at the hands of the disobedient? The pages of human history are sadly blotted. Failure from first to last, has been the record. There has been an endless discord between man and law, between the human and the Divine will. Once harmony and happiness reigned where now is confusion and chaos.

Man, when created, was upright. Between the principles of his nature and the law there was the most unbroken harmony. With an understanding free from the taint of error; with the divine law written by the finger of God upon his heart and illumined by the unclouded brightness of the Holy Spirit, man saw and approved what was holy, just and good, and the notes of praise that fell from the lips of the first human pair in Eden, rising to Heaven like sweetest incense from sinless hearts, made no unhappy harmony with the strains of angels and seraphs around the throne.

Even nature was in sympathy with the higher laws of God's universe and but one enraptured chorus of praise ascended from the great earth altar. But soon an enemy enters and stamps upon the fair creation the "image of the beast." The creature disobeys the Creator. Man, presumptive man, meddles with the keys of that mighty instrument, so skilfully attuned by the fingers of Jehovah, thereby producing *jars* and *discords* which nature felt to her centre. Yea, by that one act of disobedience man gave birth to a prolonged strain of dissonance that has come crashing down through the centuries. Created in innocence, he eats the forbidden fruit. Preserved from the devouring flood, he becomes a beastly drunkard. Brought forth from bondage and oppression and carried as on eagle's wings over sea and desert, he serves Baal and Astaroth. Lifted from humble life to a throne of power and splendor, he gives his heart to an uncircumcised stranger, and forgets the God of his fathers. Brought from the dim twilight of prophecy into the noontide splendor of the gospel day, he crucifies the Lord of Glory. And in the closing pages of inspiration we have a record black with human apostacy.

But in the face of all these sad instances of failure, the duty which God still requires of men is obedience to His revealed will. The words are as true in our day and generation, as when they first fell from the quivering lips of the seer of old: "Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams."

Obedience to law, written or unwritten, is the plain dictate of reason and nature. It is impossible for men to dwell together in unity, for human rights to be respected,

or for truth and virtue to be protected without a high and sacred respect for the majesty of law—a rightful subordination of mind and heart to its just power and influence. Show me a community where the laws are faithfully obeyed and executed, and I will show you a community distinguished for order and prosperity, a community smiling with peace, wise with culture, and rich in every virtue. But show me a community where laws are violated with impunity, and whose officers connive at crime, and I will show you a community where quarrels are bred by day and whose night hours are rendered hideous with the orgies of Bacchanalian revelry, a community whose profanity, tumult and riot make it a stench in the nostrils of decency and morality.

If, in order to the happiness of the human race here and the well ordered progress of human society, men must bow before the majesty of law, worship at her shrine and abide her injunctions, how vastly more important must it be in that sphere where we reach the highest plane of moral obligation and find the highest and holiest form of law? And how vastly important also, that we consult the *Law and Testimony* and come in the divinely appointed way when we essay to worship that great and glorious Being, who is a consuming fire and whose jealousy burns hot round about His altar!

Since obedience is a duty God requires of all his creatures, we may next inquire, "What rule hath God given to direct us in our services to Him?" And we reply that the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments are the only rule to direct us in our worship and service of Jehovah—they constitute the only rule of faith and practice.

We lay down the following proposition which it is our purpose to illustrate and defend: *That we are required to show a plain command,—let it be by positive precept, plain example or fair and legitimate inference—authorizing and prescribing both the manner and matter of our worship.*

It has been the prevailing disposition of man since his first act of disobedience to depart from and set aside the commands of God, or to blend his own inventions with the appointed ordinances of heaven. Too many, in their reckless haste to court favor and gain popularity, are consulting their own feelings and the tastes of the multitude, to the

utter neglect and disregard of the principle that we must have Divine authority for all that we do in the worship of God. In order to prove and illustrate the principle advanced, we call attention,

I. To some cases recorded in the inspired Records which clearly and powerfully present the necessity of adhering rigidly to the Divine appointment in all that we do pertaining to God.

(1.) Take the case of the construction of the Tabernacle. How frequently was Moses charged to make it *according to the pattern shown him in the mount.* All the priestly vestments, the various offerings and ceremonies were prescribed by God, and even Moses in his high position could not deviate in the slightest from the appointed plan and ritual unless God so ordered him. Everything about the tabernacle, "every knop, and flower and fringe, every bowl and branch and board, every skin and curtain and loop," had its place assigned by Divine appointment. And are we to suppose that God is *less careful, less particular,* and *less jealous* about his worship to-day? The law of Divine prescription applied to all the forms of worship among the Israelites, to the *permanent* as well as the *typical* and *transient.*

(2.) Consider the case of Nadab and Abihu. These young men were stricken down for offering "strange fire" which the Lord had not commanded. It has been suggested that these young men might have been numbered among the advanced thinkers of their day, the patrons of progress and apostles of liberty who imagined that a dash of liberalism would greatly improve and enrich the somewhat *bald* ritual of Jehovah. They failed to see why one kind of fire was not as good as another. The Divine appointment of one kind was a distinction without a difference. But God saw a difference; one was *commanded,* the other *was not,* and the penalty of their presumption was instant death. Thus was kindled upon the very threshold of Jehovah's temple a beacon "to send its lurid light athwart the centuries as a warning to all succeeding worshipers of the danger of tampering with divine ordinances by subtracting, supplementing or supplanting them by human authority."

(3.) The judgment inflicted on Uzzah furnishes a power-

ful evidence of God's jealous concern over all his ordinances, and of his determination that no human contrivances and measures shall be introduced into his worship with impunity. The ark was not being carried in the appointed way. God had commanded that it should be borne on the shoulders of the priests, but, instead, it was being hauled upon an ox-cart. Uzzah, prompted no doubt by a good motive, put forth his hand to steady the ark of God; but it was a violation of God's command, and *Uzzah died by the ark.*

(4.) But one of the most touching cases on record is that of Moses, who was denied admission to the promised land because, when sent to speak to the rock and give the people water, he smote the rock which the Lord had not commanded. There lies the promised Canaan just across the river—a land toward which Moses had journeyed for well-nigh forty long and weary years, and to whose possession he had looked with many joyous anticipations and burning hopes.

There it lies; but no, he cannot enter: he must rather climb the granite steps of the great mountain altar, and *there*, upon its bald and rugged summit, with the rock for his couch, the sky for his covering, and the cloud for his shroud; with no human friend to soothe his heart, ease his pillow or whisper peace to his departing spirit,—he must submit to the sentence, "Dust thou art and unto dust shalt thou return." Thus died Moses on Nebo's lonely summit, a witness to the just severity of God in punishing disobedience in the most eminent of his servants."

(5.) Again, when Saul returned from Amalek which he was sent *to utterly destroy* and told Samuel that he had obeyed the Lord, the prophet inquired, "What meaneth this bleating of the sheep in my ears, and this lowing of the oxen which I hear?" "O!" said Saul, "we have saved the best of the sheep and oxen to sacrifice unto the the Lord thy God." Was not Saul truly generous and devotional in desiring thus to honor God? But hear the stinging, heart-searching reply of Samuel: "Hath the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams. Because thou hast rejected the word of the Lord, he hath also

rejected thee from being King." Thus, for not obeying *in full* the commands of the Lord, the crown fell from the brow of Saul, the sceptre departed from his house, and the star of his glory went down in infamy.

II. Since the principle we are contending for may be characterized as the corner stone of the Presbyterian system, the rock upon which the Church is built, and her only protection against the encroaching flood of innovation, we will show in the *Second* place that it is clearly and explicitly taught in the standards of the Presbyterian Church, the Westminster Confession of Faith, that grand embodiment and glorious compend of the wisdom of the ages.

(a.) "The acceptable way of worshiping the true God is *instituted* by himself, and so limited by his own revealed will that he may not be worshiped according to the imaginations and devices of men, *or in any way not prescribed in the Holy Scripture.*"—Confess. of Faith, Chap. 21 § 1.

(b.) "The duties required in the second commandment are the receiving, observing and keeping pure and entire all such religious worship and ordinances as God has *instituted* in his word."

(c.) The sins *forbidden* in the Second Commandment, are "using and in any way approving any religious worship *not instituted* by God himself—corrupting the worship of God, adding to it or taking from it—and all neglect of the ordinances God has appointed."—Lar. Cat. Ques. 108 and 109.

(d.) "The Second Commandment forbiddeth the worshiping of God by images, or *in any way not appointed in his word*"—S. Cat. Ques. 51.

Note the these words employed by the framers of the Confession; *Prescribed*, *Appointed* and *Instituted*. Some of the proof texts will be found by referring to Deut. 4: 2; and 12: 32; Math. 15: 9; Rev. 22: 18–19.

It may not be improper to refer to the authority of some of the wisest and best men the Church has ever seen. (a,) Says Bishop Hall: "It is a dangerous thing in the worship of God to decline from his own institutions." (b.) M. Henry:- "The way of divine acceptance is the way of divine appointment; God will have his work done in his

own way." (c.) Rev. Dr. A. A. Hodge: "God has prescribed for us how we may worship him acceptably, and it is an offense to either neglect to worship and serve him in the way prescribed or to attempt to worship him in any way not prescribed. In no case, have we, upon the ground of taste, fashion or expediency to go beyond the clear warrant of Scripture."

(d.) Rev. Ashbel Green, D. D.: "We should see to it that we have a plain Scripture warrant for every religious act, duty or service that we either attempt ourselves or enjoin on others." (e.) Rev. John L. Girardeau, D D., LL. D.: "We are, in some respects, relaxing in our adherence to the great principle, that whatsoever is not explicitly commanded in the scriptures, or cannot be deduced from them by good and necessary consequence, is forbidden—a principle which may be characterized as the corner stone of the Presbyterian system. We have professedly appropriated it as ours. In the department of doctrine it has been maintained by us, and in that of government progress has been happily made in its application. But in the department of worship there is a growing tendency to slight it, and the experience of the Church has proved that its abandonment in one sphere is sure to produce its relinquishment in others. There is imminent danger just here; and it is the solemn duty of the young men of this Synod to subject this controlling principle, for which our fathers contended unto blood, to a full and careful study, and then fearlessly to give it that thorough-going application which its supreme importance demands. If not, as surely as water runs down hill, so surely will our Church lapse into defection from her venerable testimonies."—(Address before Synod of S. C., Oct. 24th, 1885.)

But so formidable is the argument and such an apalling aspect does it present to those who are conscious of a deviation from the Divine appointment, that human ingenuity has been exhausted and Truth tortured and put to an open shame in order to relax its rigor, and set aside its application to special cases of experience.

(1.) There are those who magnify the numbers that give countenance to their cause, forgetting that in both Morals and Religion the word of God is the only rule and guide, and not the sentiments of any number of fallible men. In

other words, they assert that truth must lie with the majority. But is this an infallible method of determining truth and right? How was it when Israel worshiped the golden calf? or in the days of Ahab, when from among the millions of Israel only *seven thousand* were found who had not bowed the knee to Baal? or when Elijah stood, single and alone, to meet the four hundred prophets of Baal? Who were right and who received the approval of heaven? How was it upon hat dark and tragic day when Jerusalem and its environments rung with the maddened cry, "Away with him, crucify him, crucify him"? Who were right during the dark ages, the multitudes that followed "the man of sin" and worshiped the virgin, or that little band of Christians who in the valleys of the Alps kept alive the sparks of true religion that ultimately kindled into the blaze of the Reformation? Who stand upon the safest ground at the present time, the *few hundred thousand* who profess the true religion, or the *countless multitudes* who are virtually unbelievers? No, the race is not always to the swift, the battle to the strong, nor truth with the multitude, and when assailed with such logic let us not be intimidated or discouraged, but rather let us remember the babe in the ark of bulrushes, the stripling of Bethlehem before the giant of Gath, the little band of Gideon and the eleven fishermen of Galilee. Let us not forget these illustrious examples of Divine strength made perfect in human weakness, of the power of minorities when God is on their side, and the Saviour's precious words of promise: "Fear not, little flock, for it is your father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom."

(2.) Others maintain that we live under the gospel dispensation which is one of greater light and liberty, freeness and fulness than the old. It is asserted that the rigorous law regulating the worship of Jehovah under the Mosaic economy has been relaxed in the New Testament.

But what are we to understand by a man's "gospel libberty"? Is it a liberty to form his doctrinal beliefs, rules of life and religious observances irrespective of the word and authority of Christ! Was it ever bondage to be subject to the commands of God? Liberty under the Gospel does not mean a liberty or license to adopt forms and manner of worship which God has not appointed. Liberty

and law are not incompatible. There can be no true liberty without law. It is little short of blasphemy to assert that it a species of thraldom to be restricted in our worship to forms and matter prescribed by God. The freedom or liberty which men enjoy under the gospel, so far as the manner and matter of their worship is concerned, does not lie "in the abrogation of the fundamental principle that God must be worshiped according to his own prescription, but in the abolition of the many cumbersome forms, minute regulations and prescriptions which formed so large a part of the legal ceremony." In the language of the Rev. Dr. Hodge: "Christian liberty is not an absolute liberty to do as we please, but a regulated liberty to obey God. There can be no liberty which sets a man independant of the will of God." The New Testament ritual, while simpler, is no less binding than the old. The Church is still pre-eminently "Christ's house," so that "the intervention of any human judgment as to what shall constitute the furniture of that house is a profanation of and intermeddling with what is wholly the production of infinite wisdom."

(3.) There are yet others who claim that there are many things which, while not *directly commanded* are not *expressly forbidden* and hence are to be tolerated or permitted. But the very principle in question implies a prohibition of all that is not commanded in the scriptures by positive precept, plain example, or fair and legitimate inference. Admit for a moment the principle which demands a direct prohibition, and see what follows. Why, you have opened a wide door through which the incense, the crosses and crucifixes, the bowings and candles, the seven sacraments and other scarlet trappings and gilded blazonry of Rome can enter. Where is power to exclude them? Can you prove a *direct prohibition?* The fire which Nadab and Abihu offered was not forbidden in so many words; but the absence of a direct command proved to be a sufficient prohibition to warrant God in punishing the innovation with instant death. And is not Jeroboam censured for appointing a feast for Israel on the 15th day of the *eigth* month instead of the *seventh!* (1 Kings 12: 33.) He might have replied that God had not *forbidden the eighth* month, and that therefore it was allowable; but the

inspired writer nevertheless censures him for devising in his own heart a time not appointed by God.

Moreover, when the Testimonies of the Church expressly state that the acceptable way of worshiping the true God is *appointed*, *instituted* and *prescribed* by himself, is that not sufficient to require of all a plain command authorizing the act of worship? But the language of the Confession of Faith leaves no room for doubt or cavil: "The second commandment *forbiddeth the worshiping of God in any way not appointed in his Word*."

If Jehovah has given to his Church a complete rule of faith and worship, does it not follow that the *addition* of anything *not expressly appointed*, *or the setting aside*, *disuse*, *or neglect of anything appointed* is not only a daring invasion of the Divine Prerogative, but a reflection upon Divine wisdom and offensive to him who has said, "My glory will I not give to another."

III. But, leaving these objections, let us pass to the consideration of a *Third* argument enforcing the duty of conformity to the Divine command in the worship of God, viz.: *The propriety of God's appointing and directing all the parts of his worship.* If God is to be worshiped in some manner, it would be unpardonable presumption for any one to deny that God has the ability to prescribe forms of worship more suitable to his dignity and our condition than any in the power of men to devise. This consideration applies with special emphasis to that part of worship denominated *Praise*, whose main design is to declare and magnify the excellencies of the Divine character, and to give expression to every variety of devotional feeling which a contemplation of those perfections is designed to call forth. It is manifest to every judicious mind that there must be a perfect knowledge of God,—of his nature and character. Without such an exhaustive knowledge, how can any *creature* frame a perfect and adequate system of worship? And does any created being possess this knowledge? "Who can utter the mighty acts of God, or show forth all his praise?" "What man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man that is in him? Even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God." And who art thou, O vain man, who presumest to come into Jehovah's awful presence and to

make known to him that which is beyond the capacity of strongest angel and tallest seraph? How sadly true that "Fools rush in where angels fear to tread!"

IV. A *fourth* consideration, favoring a rigid adherence to the Divine command, is The *evils which result from a departure from this fundamental principle.*

(1.) And *first*, we find that whenever there is a departure from the principle we are advocating, very soon that which we first regarded as the *obligatory* becomes the *optional*, while that which was at first claimed to be *merely permissive*, comes to be regarded as *prescribed.* Whenever any institution of Divine authorship comes to be regarded as merely optional, that institution will either be entirely disregarded, or by a natural process will become in the course of time to be recognized as the obligatory. For illustration, we know that a few decades ago the law authorizing the exclusive use of the Psalms was recognized by all the branches of the Presbyterian Church; but after a time a permissive warrant was supposed to be found for the use of hymns of human composition. The use of the inspired hymns of the Bible was not sinful or to be prohibited, but hymns of human composition might be used; and what has been the result? Why, the hymns of Divine prescription have been practically set aside. They are now regarded as merely allowable or permissible, while hymns of human composition occupy a place of as high, or even higher authority.

The mingling of the optional or permissive with the prescribed and obligatory has resulted in the exclusion of the latter from the high position which it is entitled to occupy in accordance with the design and appointment of the King and Head of the Church. That which was at one time regarded as the prescribed and obligatory has been made almost utterly void—has barely the force of an optional warrant—while that which was at first claimed as only permissive or allowable, is practically regarded by many as the prescribed and obligatory.

(2.) Again, whenever the Divine and the human are placed upon the same level, whenever the scripures are supplemented by human inventions, more deference will be shown to the human than to the Divine,—the human will be exalted at the sacrifice of the Divine.

That the admission of human devices in the worship of God is apt to result in the setting aside of the positive enactments of God is taught by our Lord when he said to the Scribes and Pharisees: "Thus have ye made the commandment of God of none effect by your tradition," and "Full well ye reject the commandment of God, that ye may keep your own tradition." The Jews of old were far more tenacious of their own inventions, of traditionary dreams, than of God's revealed code of duty.

No fact is more universal and unquestionable than that churches, whfch have most of the human in their worship and government, observe more carefully and rigidly and defend with greater zeal the rites and ceremonies of man's invention, than they do the plainest ordinances of the written word.

In the time of the Stewarts the Puritans were persecuted,—were fined and imprisoned—for not obeying the canons and rubrics, the foolish rules and regulations of foolish men, while open disobedience to the commands of God, such as intemperance and profanity among the clergy, was not even rebuked, much less, punished. None will deny that the recognition of "Saint's days" and other "holy days" additional to the Sabbath, has interfered with and resulted in a diminution of a proper observance and sanctification of the Sabbath. Those Churches having most of these "holy days" have always heen characteristically lax in the observance of that one day which God has set apart for himself. And we have just adverted to the historical fact that the introduction of hymns of human composition has resulted in the practical exclusion of those of Divine Inspiration.

Admitting, for the moment that we have the same and equal authority for the use of Divine and human songs in the worship of God, it will not be denied that more deference is shown the latter. The human has been exalted at the sacrifice of the Divine. Men's songs are preferred to God's songs. Are not the grand and glorious Psalms, Hymns and Spiritual songs of God-given origin and prescription practically excluded from the worship of Jehovah in many places, while hymns from divers and even doubtful sources are used in their place? Thus our view of the law of worship is further vindicated by the result that

logically and inevitably flows from a departure therefrom, viz., that whenever the Divine and the human are placed upon the same level, the human will be preferred and exalted to the disparagement or utter disregard of the Divine.

(3.) Another consequence to be deplored which has in no small degree resulted from a disregard and neglect of the great principle in question, is the divided state of the Christian Church. There are Universalists and Papists, Unitarians and Armenians, Baptists and Episcopalians, Lutherans and Calvinists, Mormons and Moravians, Adventists and Swedenborgians—and others, each claiming to be the Church of Christ.

And if you could have listened to the songs of praise which to-day are offered to God as acceptable worship, it would have been the confusion of Babel. You would have heard almost everything offered to God as a pleasing service, from "blank Arminianism to cold, heartless Deism." And can they all be equally right and equally acceptable to God? They all claim that the Church has a right to direct her worship, but here we find a hundred different sects each claiming to be the true Church and nearest right. Has Jehovah given laws and regulations so multiform and antagonistic?

We forget that truth is a "glorious organism, from which nothing can be abstracted and to which nothing heterogeneous can be added, without detriment to the beauty and power of the whole;" we forget that the Church as organized by Jesus Christ has "one Lord, one Faith, one Baptism," that Christ has given but one system of government; but one code of laws; but one form of acceptable worship, and that those only are nearest right who are nearest the pattern shown us in the Mount. It is not only unreasonable, but the climax of absurdity, to suppose that Christ would have given laws to his Church so vastly different and justly antagonistic, laws that have kindled in his temple a flame that consumes the bonds of peace and love, laws that provoke the "rage of theologians" and mar the beauty and symmetry of his body, laws that invade the sacred precincts of domestic life and set the father against the son, the daughter against the mother, and the husband against the wife.

No, no, such a thought is revolting. God has given no

such laws to his Church; and had the Christian Church always adhered to the Divine command; had no human hand ever meddled nor human wisdom interfered; had no innovations of man's contrivance been smuggled into the Church under the specious plea of liberty, gospel liberty, the worship of the Church to-day would have been as harmonious and heavenly as that of pure and sinless spirits around the throne. These principles constitute the only permanent basis of union among all denominations—the only ground where warring parties may meet in concord, ungird their armor, forget their animosities and with one voice and one heart unite in the worship of the great Jehovah.

They furnish a platform broad enough for the whole household of faith to stand upon; for those who adhere to the things divinely commanded enjoy in the largest measure the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. "Their differences are but the varying ripples of the sea; their unity, the unity of the ocean's unseen bed."

Moreover, the man or the Church planted upon these great principles is not afraid to risk popularity in their defence. They are not driven from their position or frightened into ignominious surrender when assailed by obloquy and contempt, for they stand upon the solid rock, which, like the rock in mid ocean, holds its position unmoved and unshaken amid the fury of the blast, breaking into spray and dashing back into the face of the storm the assaulting waves. The time-serving trimmer may gain an ephemeral notoriety by the adroit use of temporary expedients, but he alone achieves enduring renown who identifies himself with unchanging principles and defends them whenever assailed.

We have presented these thoughts for your careful and prayerful consideration to-day, believing them to be warranted by the plain teaching of Scripture.

Candor compels us to admit that there is a tendency towards relaxation in our adherence to the great principle that whatsoever is not commanded in the word of God is forbidden. Some manifest a disposition to disparage or or disregard the precise forms enjoined by God, or, while applying the principle in the department of doctrine, they slight it in the department of government and worship.

But so intimate is the connection between the doctrine, government and worship of the Church, that whatever affects the integrity and purity of any one of them, will produce a corresponding modification of the others. And the history of the Church has proved that the abandonment of the principle of adherence to the Divine command in one sphere is sure to produce its relinquishment in others. We are aware that indifference to the prescription of Jehovah is regarded by many as a mark of exemption from besotting prejudice, and as evincing a wider liberality of mind and broader Christian charity. But let us not be deceived. If we believe that our doctrinal beliefs, form of government, and mode and matter of worship are agreeable to and founded on the word of God, let us stand by them like men and obey them to the letter. And it is of the utmost importance that pastor and ruling elders be faithful and diligent in teaching the people the doctrines of the Church, that they may hold and defend them, not merely on the testimony of the Church or the ground of tradition, but because they know them to be principles contained in the word of the living God.

Those only are useful and influential members of any organization, secular or religious, who hold its peculiar tenets from conviction.

Fidelity to our venerable standards is no more the dictate of wisdom than it is the necessity of existence, and they should stand like a never-sleeping sentinel by those gateways of the Church where there is a temptation for principle to go out and embrace popularity, or where maudlin sentiment may usurp the power of Scriptural truth. 'Tis by just such insidious approaches that plausible error creeps to the front, and encountering no resistance on the part of the pulpit or church session, at last ventures to lift its head in the higher courts of the Church, where it not unfrequently becomes an occasion of strife and disruption.

We have received from our fathers a scriptural organization whose shining distinction is its steadfast adherence to the revealed will of God as the exclusive standard of Faith and Duty, apart from which there is nothing valuable in religious belief or lawful in religious practice. The battles of Presbyterianism in its purest form have been fought and won under the banner on which was written, "Hold

fast the form of sound words; Contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints." Some of her sons have been content to suffer reproach on account of the tenacity with which they have clung to the "Thus it is written." And when we hear the cries of those who claim to be in the ranks of advancing thought, to relax the bands of our authority; or of those who, in the name of modern liberalism, have presumed to remodel the sanctuary of God, let us not forget that these truths have stood the test of ages—yea have survived the assaults of men who were giants taller and mightier than any one we have now to meet.

Let us not forget the baptismal fires of martyrdom through which these grand old truths have passed, and passed unscathed, because there was with them one like unto the Son of God. Let us not forget the heroic struggles which our fathers endured when witnessing for the truth which the Holy Ghost had impressed upon their saintly lives. To-day the testimony of these witnesses is sounding in our ears; yea, a voice speaks to us in trumpet tones from valleys whitened with the bones of saints from the tombs of martyrs and hillocks red with blood; a voice that reminds us of our lineage that rebukes our cowardice and bids us repeat the same witness.

This is an age of progress; we must advance; but let us not advance by relaxing the bands of a system that has been baptized with the unction of the Holy Ghost, and that has proven a benediction to the world. Let us rather progress in holy activities and Christian graces, in zeal for the truth and love for the souls of men. And let us pray God to hasten the day when "Zion's watchmen shall see eye to eye;" when the Church with one mouth shall glorify God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ; and when the embattled hosts of God's elect shall rise in the majesty of their power, overcome the opposing forms of error and falsehood, restore the crown rights of Immanuel, and in the presence of a redeemed earth and rejoicing heaven crown him "King of kings, and Lord of lords." Amen.

church
UA
23
.P
#8